

FLIGHT JACKET

Vol. 6, No. 19

Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

May 14, 2004

Miramar named 'best of the best'

Commander in chief applauds air station as top Marine Corps installation

Story by Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

WASHINGTON – Miramar's top brass traveled to the nation's capitol May 7 to accept the prestigious honor of one of the best military installations in the world.

Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti, commander of Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, took center stage in the Pentagon courtyard and applauded the hard work and dedication of Miramar's 11,000 Marines, Sailors and civilian employees as he accepted the 2004 Commander in Chief's Award for Installation Excellence.

"Winning this award for the first time means a great deal," said Gallinetti. "The Navy and Marine Corps has worked very hard to increase the capacity of what is involved at Miramar and has put a lot of money into improving not only the living conditions but also quality of life."

This year's event was especially ceremonial, remarked Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Installations and Environment Raymond F. Dubois, as it commemorated the 20th anniversary of the Installation Excellence Award. In 1985, then-President Ronald Reagan gave a challenge to the men and women of the Department of Defense. He asked them to make use of their resources to sustain the mission, increase productivity of the workforce and enhance the quality of life for all who live and work at military installations worldwide.

The prize for producing the best Defense organizations in the world, added Dubois, would be a coveted "President's Cup." This award would be bestowed upon the top five installations within the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Defense Logistics Agency by the commander in chief.

Bob Stone, founder of the Installation Excellence Award, said the winners of this year's award "make us

all proud."

"Installation Excellence is the way you wisely spent the tax payer's money to boost defense capability and show the troops you support that they are the most important people in the world. Our soldiers, Sailors, airmen and Marines must always know that they are the world's best. You do your part when you provide them with excellent facilities and services."

Several factors attributed to Miramar being named the Marine Corps' finest installation this year, including the station's dedication to maintaining combat readiness. The air station acted as a "major aerial port of embarkation and debarkation for Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, flawlessly processing and deploying over 7,000 servicemembers," said Dubois.

Miramar's Marines, Sailors and civilian Marines, added Gallinetti, "met the demands of increased operational tempo with extraordinary skill and ingenuity, ensuring a safe deployment and return of our troops," said

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Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz stresses the importance of high quality military bases during the award ceremony May 7. Photo by Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez



Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti, commander of Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, accepts the Commander in Chief's Award for Installation Excellence from H.T. Johnson, assistant secretary to the Navy, during a ceremony at the Pentagon May 7. Photo by Sgt. Valerie A. Martinez

Improvements on tap for Fallujah, Al Kharma City

1st Marine Division Press Release

AR RAMADI, Iraq – The 1st Marine Division is currently focused on destroying anti-Iraqi forces in the Al Anbar province. Simultaneously, the Marines are establishing patient, persistent presence in the key areas throughout the province while supporting the development of competent, trustworthy Iraqi Security Forces and conducting civil military operations.

Marines near Fallujah were approved to start the Fallujah Outreach Center Project. This will be a program for teaching local Iraqis trade skills. Job skills taught will include plumbing, electrical and construction for more than 80 young men while providing employment at the same time.

The center will be constructed north of the Fallujah Liaison Team building. This construction project will use materials and equipment from qualified

Fallujah business and vendors.

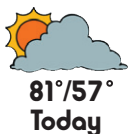
Employment for Fallujans continues to climb. Since the end of offensive operations, 1,700 Iraqis are employed in the Fallujah Brigade and another 138 are employed in locally contracted projects. Projects yet to be started will boost that number by another 205.

In addition, Marines attended the Al Kharma City meeting for the first time in a month. Visits were put on hold during offensive operations last month. The youth director in Al Kharma was paid \$10,000 to start construction on the Al Kharma Youth Center.

The director of sanitation in Al Kharma said improvements to the city's sanitation system would begin Tuesday. Additionally, the city's water director would submit bids Tuesday for a project to bring potable water to seven outlying villages.

Inside

Weekend forecast from Miramar's weather station



81°/57°
Today



78°/57°
Saturday



77°/57°
Sunday

MAG-16 CASEVAC saves lives



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Building a symbol of strength



Page 9

New body armor finding its way to Marines

Story by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Coinciding with President George W. Bush's proposal for a larger U.S. military and expanded force protection measures, military suppliers and Congress are rushing to get new body armor to troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

For many Marines, the old flak vest is giving way to the new Interceptor body armor—an effective and highly valued piece of gear in the global war on terrorism.

“The Interceptor body armor is saving lives,” said Thomas Raleigh, satellite Consolidated Issue Facility manager. “The Marines coming back from Iraq have been telling us that the Interceptor body armor is as good as gold. Wearing this will make the difference between life or death sometimes, and the added neck, collar and groin attachments make this an effective protection system.”

Designed to help provide Marines and other servicemembers with the tools they need to get the job done, the Bush administration's new defense budget calls for an additional \$25 billion to support military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and,

in particular, more body armor and armored vehicles for U.S. troops.

Recently the House Armed Services Committee issued a press release applauding the president's announced defense budget plans.

“I applaud the administration for recognizing the needs of our troops,” said U.S. Representative Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.), chairman, House Armed Services Committee. “In my meetings with (President Bush) and (Secretary Donald Rumsfeld) they have always expressed the belief I share: we will not hesitate to provide our military personnel with all the tools they need to prevail in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

The congressman from El Cajon, Calif., also said his committee plans to review the Bush administration's request this week and work to provide soldiers and Marines with new force protection measures, including more body armor to meet new threats and better surveillance capabilities, according to the release.

But because the Interceptor body armor is still in relative short supply, deploying servicemembers are getting priority at their points of issue.

“All (I Marine Expeditionary Force) and (3rd Marine Air-

craft Wing) Marines deploying within 60 days who come here to be issued gear are being issued the newer body armor first,” explained Raleigh. “(At Miramar) we've already issued the Interceptor body armor to almost 2,500 Marines from this facility so far.”

Raleigh added that the new unisex body armor is equipped with removable throat and groin protectors, as well as front and back removable plates, that are capable of stopping 7.62 mm rounds.

“With the inserts, it weighs 16.4 pounds so it's lighter than the older flak vest,” Raleigh said. “Each of the two inserts weighs 4 pounds, and the outer tactical vest weighs 8.4 pounds.”

“The (Interceptor body armor's) lighter weight provides more mobility than the older flak vest,” Raleigh said. “The new armor also has an outer tactical vest made of Kevlar weave that's capable of stopping a 9 mm bullet, plus the webbing on the front and back of the vest permits attaching other small pieces of equipment. The small-arms protective inserts are made of a boron carbide ceramic with a spectra shield backing that's an extremely

See **ARMOR**, page 11

Veterans Affairs reaches out

Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs is expanding its efforts to reach veterans of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan to ensure they are aware of benefits they have earned.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Anthony J. Principi is sending a personal letter to more than 150,000 veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom who have recently separated from the military to thank them for their service and to remind them of their eligibility for VA health care and other benefits.

“I want these men and women to know that we are grateful for their service to our country,” Principi said. “Those who served in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places around the world have risked their lives to make America more secure. One of the ways the nation shows its gratitude is by ensuring veterans receive the benefits they deserve.”

Principi's letter includes brochures and links to the department's Web pages that contain more details about VA benefits, including an opportunity to apply for benefits online.

As Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom veterans continue to leave the active duty military, VA expects to mail about 10,000 letters each month. The first letters were sent Monday. VA also regularly mails information packets to all servicemembers separating from the military to remind them of eligibility for basic VA benefits, such as VA-guaranteed home loans and education benefits. In addition, there are provisions in these programs for reservists and National Guard members.

The additional outreach to those recently deployed

to combat theaters alerts them to special eligibility that increases their access to health care for two years after separation from the military for illnesses and injuries that may be the result of military service. For those medical problems, VA waives copayments for inpatient and outpatient care. VA focuses special attention on those with service-related disabilities, officials said. The department's goal is a seamless transition from military to VA services, with claims for financial benefits receiving expedited processing.

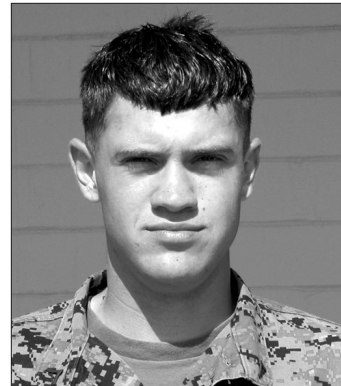
For the seriously wounded, VA has counselors working at the bedsides of patients in military hospitals with the largest numbers of casualties to begin benefit applications before they leave the military. VA social service personnel work at these military facilities to plan health care coordination as servicemembers move from military to VA care. This helps ensure a smooth transition to a VA hospital or clinic near the veteran's intended residence for continuity of medical care, officials said.

In partnership with state and local government benefits counselors and veterans service organization representatives, VA annually briefs about 200,000 servicemembers around the world before discharge to help prepare them for civilian transition and VA benefits. The department operates benefits offices at 133 military installations to help service members with conditions arising during service prepare to begin receiving VA compensation promptly after discharge.

“VA has learned many lessons since the Gulf War in 1991 and other conflicts, which will ensure that this newest generation of war veterans receives the health care and assistance they deserve when they return to civilian life,” Principi said.

MIRAMARKS

“How will the new body armor help troops in Iraq?”



LANCE CPL. NEIL PAPPAS

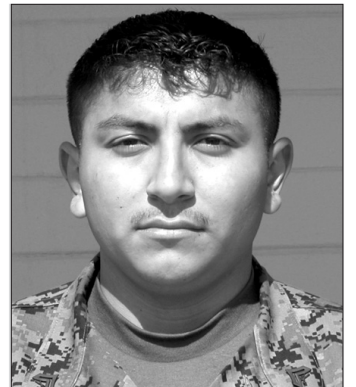
Maintenance
MWCS-38

“It is a lot better than the old flak jackets that let everything through. The armor plating is a lot better because every bit of protection helps.”

CPL. JOEL RIOS

Supply Clerk
MWCS-38

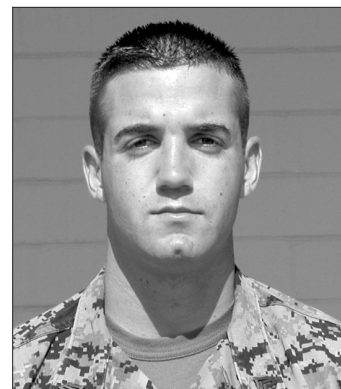
“It is helping a great deal but is adding a lot of weight. They should design some lighter plates for it.”



SGT. BRIAN HUPPI

Mechanic
MWSS-373

“The new flak jacket really works. A staff sergeant at (Combined Arms Exercise) got hit with a negligent discharge from a (Squad Automatic Weapon) and wasn't hurt at all.”



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Public Affairs Director 3rd MAW Forward

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Public affairs Director MCAS Miramar

Spouse thanks local Marine community

Commentary by Nancy Nicholson

La Mesa

On March 10, 2004, I lost a husband, my children their father, and the Marine Corps and our community lost a man who made a difference.

How can I possibly express to my community the impact they have collectively made on our family? We have no words to express our gratitude. Each person who personally wrote, called and brought meals is remarkable, but as a group, they have moved us.

The continual outpouring of help from friends, my children's classmates, their teachers and schools, our neighbors and the Marine Corps are supporting my family through a difficult time.

The definition of "community" has taken on a new meaning. We wish to give our heart-felt thanks to those who surround us, near and far. There are wonderful people in the world ... we have experienced their kindness.

Story of thanks told time and time again

Commentary by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

The heritage of the Marine Corps is more than just that of an organization.

Where the rubber meets the road it is the individual Marine who honors the Corps with the presence, not the other way around.

The same story of appreciation and thanks we received from Nancy Nicholson is told time and time again worldwide any time a Marine leaves this world and passes through the gates to the next.

We often speak at safety standdowns of the loss the Corps feels when we lose a Marine, but rarely do we get the privilege of being allowed into the inner sanctum of a family's thoughts and heart-felt feelings.

It is rare when we get to make the difference in a grieving family's life.

As Marines, we should strive to make this type of a difference in the lives not just of those who are grieving, but for those who need any type of assistance.

Send you letters or opinions to the Flight Jacket editor. Include your name, rank and unit, and send to: mcmeence@miramar.usmc.mil.

Deployed Marines return home

Elements of 3rd MAW advanced party return from stint in Iraq

Story by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

A homecoming ceremony was held here at Hangar 4 May 5 to celebrate the return of more than 80 Marines who were recently deployed to Iraq in support of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing operations.

The Marines were from various units stationed here, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif.

According to Master Gunnery Sgt. Charles Woods, Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38 operations chief and Kansas City, Mo., native, the Marines returned earlier than normal for a variety of reasons.

"Most of the Marines left for Iraq in February and were part of the advanced parties or may have received orders requiring them to return early," he said. "Nevertheless, it is superb to have them back."

The Marines were coming back to a world of change after being gone for several months.

Kimberly Rivera, wife of Sgt. Rodrigo Rivera, who had been deployed since February, awaited her husband's return with a newborn baby in hand.

"It feels really good to have him home," she said. "We just had a new baby, and he has really been wanting to see her. While he has been gone I have been sending him pictures so he is really excited to actually see and hold her."

For others, Iraq deployments have be-

come a way of life and have been easier to deal with.

"Iraq was a little bit better this time since we had a little bit different mission, and things are going pretty good over there, but it always feel good to come home," said Sgt. Tanner Bass, MWCS-38 embarkation chief and Saginaw, Texas, native.

His wife, Karla, who was left home with four kids, found a few tricks to making the deployments go by faster.

"The only way to really get by is to just not watch the news and don't listen to all the gossip," she said.

With this homecoming the Marines will return to their work sections, and some will eventually return to Iraq, but nevertheless it is good to be back, added Tanner.

"I know he is going to have to go back, but for now it is nice to have him home," said Karla.



Cpl. Marivel Morales of Marine Aircraft Group 16, Personal Security Detachment, holds her baby girl after returning from Iraq in the late evening of May 5. Morales was one of more than 80 Marines who deployed in support of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing operations in Iraq. Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro

MAG-16 supports Camp Ar Ramadi ground forces

Story by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

MAG-16 Combat Correspondent

CAMP AR RAMADI, Iraq – Marine Aircraft Group 16 helicopters and personnel evacuated multiple casualties following a mortar attack here May 2.

Five Sailors and one soldier were killed in the early-afternoon attack and many others sustained injuries ranging from minor to severe.

Multiple helicopters from Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161 and escort aircraft from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 775 were contacted for the evacuation just minutes after the attack.

Initial reports caused two CH-46E Sea Knights with AH-1W Super Cobra escorts to launch from a nearby base. After the severity of the attack was fully understood, the two squadrons launched all on-duty casualty evacuation assets to transport the wounded servicemembers.

After the on-duty assets of both squadrons responded, HMM-161 immediately activated its off-duty crew to maintain the alert status.

Waves of helicopters ferried the wounded to Combat Support Hospitals throughout Iraq for treatment of shrapnel wounds and concussions.

HMM-161 has set aside many of its aircraft for CASEVAC, said Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris J. Caprio, CASEVAC corpsmen, HMM-161.

“(HMM-161) was tasked for the CASEVAC mission in the (area known as the) Sunni Triangle,” he said. “We have dedicated assets for the sole purpose of provid-

ing that support, whereas during the onset of Operation Iraqi Freedom, they were performing lifts of opportunity to evacuate wounded servicemembers.”

Caprio was called up along with approximately 10 other off-duty corpsmen to help with the casualties. They manned alert positions, ready to launch if needed. The “devil doc” claimed that his fellow corpsmen showed true professionalism while caring for the servicemembers.

“They did a tremendous job and handled themselves phenomenally from the level of calm, to the ability to treat the casualties under those circumstances,” the New Milford, Conn., native said. “It’s a shock to the system, but they were able to treat, diagnose and make decisions that no one should have to make.”

“It’s a tough thing to have to do, but they performed extremely well, with continuous operations to and from the point of injury in a rapid period of time,” he added. “They had to drop off victims and keep returning to the chaos.”

In response to the attack, Col. Guy M. Close, commanding officer, MAG-16, grieved for the loss of the servicemembers.

“Our hearts go out to the families and friends of the servicemembers who were lost. Unfortunately, our future holds many unknown challenges as we continue with the global war on terrorism. However, what will always be known is that the resolve of the Marines, Sailors and soldiers of MAG-16 will never falter. These young men and women are the best our country has to offer. Their spirit is overwhelming. All Americans should be proud.”



Petty Officers 3rd Class Herman Otero and Luis Fonseca (shown in flight suits), both casualty evacuation corpsmen with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 161, Marine Aircraft Group 16, receive a brief from an Army medic on the status of two wounded servicemembers being evacuated May 2. The pick up was the second for the corpsmen and crew aboard the CH-46E Sea Knight in response to a hostile fire attack on Camp Ar Ramadi. Photo by Sgt. Nathan K. LaForte

Runway repairmen keep 3rd MAW assets flying in Iraq

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

AL TAQQADUM, Iraq – With an assortment of air operations being conducted on a nonstop basis here, the ability to take off and land 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing planes and helicopters is paramount.

To ensure that runways remain accessible to aircraft at all times, the Marines of Heavy Equipment Section, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd MAW, are available at a moment’s notice to repair any destruction to the landing strips.

“Basically, our role is to take care of any damage the runways have,” said Staff Sgt. Gary L. Stouffer, heavy equipment chief, MWSS-374, and Newport, Pa., native. “For instance, in case of something like a mortar attack, we have a crew already on standby, ready to go out and do an immediate fix on the runway.”

“We use rock, sand and anything that can patch the surface in a safe manner to get that runway up and running as fast as we can,” the 29-year-old added.

The rapid runway repair Marines received an opportunity to test their skills almost as soon as they arrived here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, explained Stouffer.

“When we got here in February, one of the biggest things (3rd MAW) needed to get up and running was a runway that had a huge crater in it because of enemy fire,” he mentioned.

According to Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, commanding general, 3rd MAW, the damaged taxiway was identified as a



The Marines of Heavy Equipment Section, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, look on as a KC-130 Hercules carrying Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, commanding general, 3rd MAW, successfully lands on a runway they recently repaired in Al Taqqadum, Iraq, March 22. Amos was the first to test the runway, which was renovated by Marines following damage caused by incoming rockets. Photo by Cpl. Chance W. Haworth

safer means of taking off and landing, which made its immediate repair critical.

“We had the main two runways in Taqqadum that all the big airplanes landed on, and then we had a cross taxiway, which was about 6,000-feet long that ran perpendicular across both runways. We took a look at the threat, because the planes landing on the (main two) runways were getting shot at,” he explained.

“We decided to use the taxiway as a runway so that we could fly in across (Lake Habbaniyah) and not get shot at, but first we had to fix the bomb crater left over from OIF I,” added Amos.

Within days, the 20-foot-deep, 60-foot-diameter hole was filled and ready for action, due to the efforts of the rapid runway repairmen of MWSS-374 and the unique equipment they employ.

“We used excavators to move the materials we needed to fill the crater and a water truck, in addition to a roller to both compact the sand and wet it repeatedly as we mixed it,” mentioned Stouffer. “At the end, we used a grader to make a nice level surface.”

Apparently, the work performed by the rapid runway repairmen of MWSS-374 was so exceptional that the 3rd MAW commanding general made the bold decision to fly aboard the first KC-130 Hercules flight to land there following its repair.

“The service those Marines provide is indispensable,” Amos emphasized. “I wanted the Marines of MWSS-374 to know that I trusted their work on the ground and that I appreciated their great efforts. As a demonstration of that appreciation, I wanted

to be the first person to land on the runway,” he added.

The daring gesture shown by the 3rd MAW leader evidently made a lasting impression upon the Marines who repaired the runway.

“It showed that the general has a lot of faith in his Marines,” said 26-year-old Lance Cpl. Clint D. Short, heavy equipment operator, MWSS-374, and Wauseon, Ohio, native. “I think it made the whole section feel pretty proud.”

MASS-3 changes command in Iraq

Story by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

MWHS-3 Combat Correspondent

CAMPAR RAMADI, Iraq - Just beyond reach of the fabled Euphrates River, the mantle of leadership at Marine Air Support Squadron 3, Marine Air Control Group 38, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, officially switched hands during the change of command here May 7.

In the midst of a ceremony attended by the commanding generals of 3rd MAW and 1st Marine Division, Lt. Col. James D. Gass relinquished control of MASS-3 into the capable hands of Lt. Col. David F. Aumuller of Worthington, Ohio.

"Frankly, I couldn't feel more comfortable with the officer who just took over this command," smiled Gass, a native of Sewanee, Tenn. "Lieutenant Colonel Aumuller has a vast array of experiences, is extremely energetic and knows where he wants this squadron to go.

"I think he's really going to be able to capitalize on the unit's strength and make improvements wherever he sees the need to. The bottom line is, he has a great squadron, and MASS-3 has a great commander," added the Vanderbilt University graduate, who will now serve as the executive officer of MACG-38 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

Aumuller, a 1984 Naval Academy graduate, realizes that the chance to lead MASS-3 in a wartime situation is an opportunity that will require his full leadership abilities to overcome various obstacles.

"It's very motivating to be out here with all my Marines in a combat environment and seeing how well they're doing, but you also recognize the immense responsibility you have to take care of them, keep them safe, yet still accomplish the mission," he said.

"The biggest challenge is probably going to be sustaining the squadron's operational tempo," added Aumuller. "We have Marines who participated in (Operation Iraqi Freedom I), we are now doing OIF II, and we'll probably be involved to some extent in OIF III."

"Our most important assets are our people, so we don't want to grind them up. We want to make sure we try to pace ourselves for the long haul," he said.

According to Maj. Gen. James F. Amos, commanding general, 3rd MAW, the credentials Aumuller brings to the table made him the perfect choice for the new MASS-3 commander.

"Lieutenant Colonel Aumuller has a significant pedigree and has worked for some commanders that I know specifically who trained him well. He knows what he's doing, and I know I won't have to look in his direction with one ounce of worry," he stated.

In assuming his new role as leader of MASS-3, Aumuller acknowledged his predecessor for setting a high standard for him to live up to.

"Lieutenant Colonel Gass is a great American, and he did phenomenal things with this command," the 42-year-old offered. "I believe that it is a huge challenge for me to continue the great job he's done."

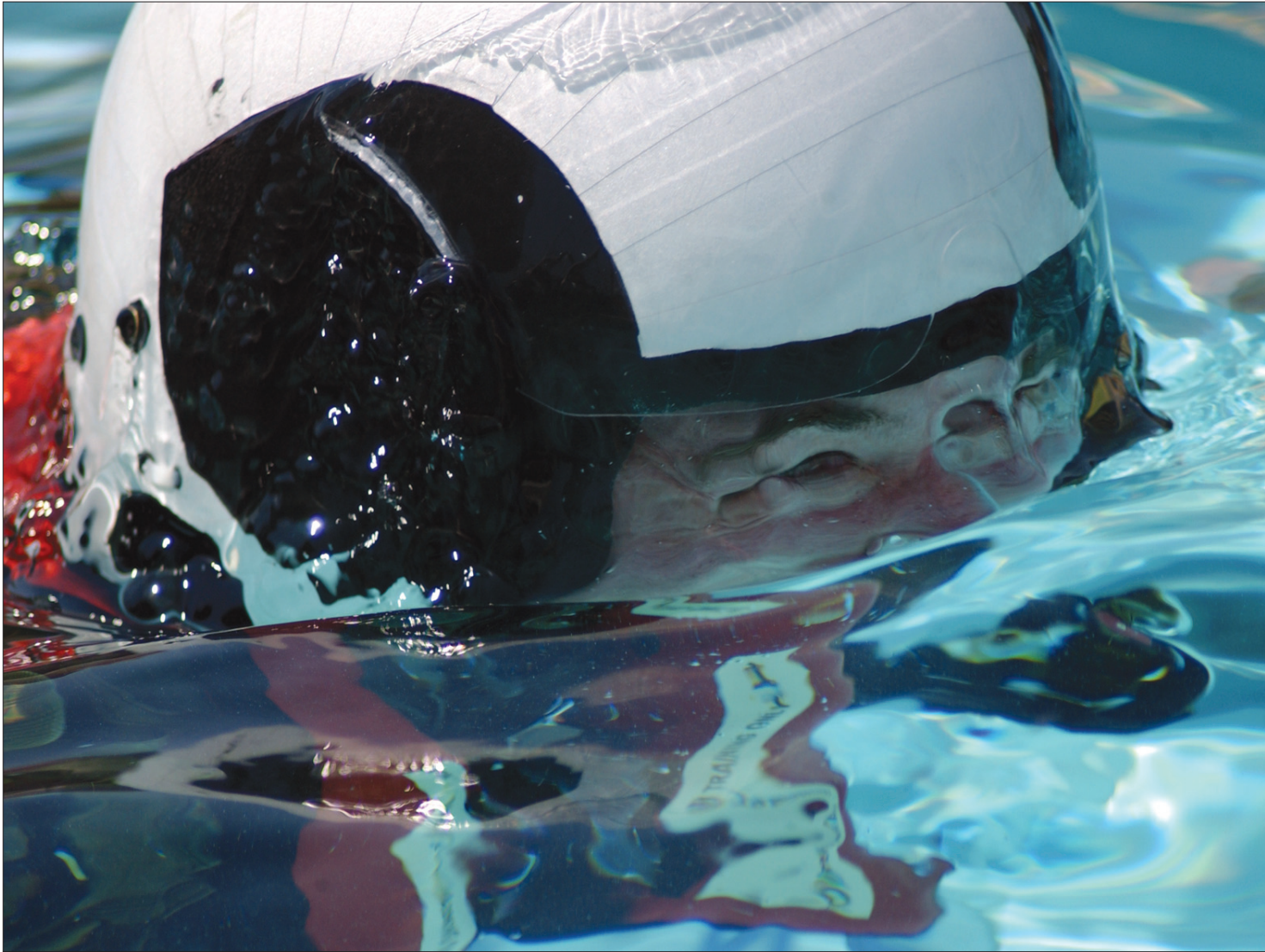


Lt. Col. James D. Gass (center), outgoing commanding officer, Marine Air Support Squadron 3, is congratulated by 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Commanding General Maj. Gen. James F. Amos during the MASS-3 change of command ceremony May 7. Photo by Staff Sgt. Houston F. White Jr.

Miramar recycles

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at 577-6366.

Pilots, aircrew dive into water survival



Pilots and aircrew from the Navy and Marine Corps undergo hours of vigorous training in the water at the Aviation Survival Training Center here. The courses simulate real time mishaps while in a safe environment. *Photo by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones*

Story by Lance Cpl. Skye Jones

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

It was approaching midnight and all was calm over the waters. The ship sailed smoothly into the unruffled night. Suddenly, “Iceberg, right ahead!” The engines stopped while the crew waited for the inevitable doom - water gashed through and slowly filled the ship up.

The Titanic was a mammoth ship that sunk to the pits of the ocean and few souls survived that fateful crash.

Jets, helicopters and other aircraft can descend to the bed of the ocean, just like the Titanic did. To prepare Marines and Sailors for a possible ill-fated event, the Aviation Survival Training Center puts pilots through realistic scenarios that just might save their lives one day.

“This is considered high-risk training. Pilots must have a medical screening beforehand to ensure that they are able to complete the course safely,” said Petty Officer 1st Class Marcus A. Dingle, instructor and Aviation Life Support Systems technician.

“We give the students the core training that they need to be safely rescued,” continued the Hempstead, N.Y., native.

The center tailors each of their classes to the specific aircraft that a pilot flies. For example, the class for F/A-18 pilots must undergo parachute training. They must learn how to prevent any mishap that may occur if the parachute malfunctions. On the other hand, helicopter pilots do not need to go through that phase of training due to the nature of their aircraft.

Approximately 20 helicopter pilots

and aircrew were part of the most recent class to undergo aviation survival training.

These courses are about as close as you can get to a real situation while still being safe, said Petty Officer 1st Class James F. Lackowski, safety diver and Naval Aviation Water Survival Instructor.

“Marines and Sailors need to know how to use their gear, especially with the frequency they fly over water. They need these skills,” continued the Chicago native.

After two hours of classroom instruction, the students put their skills to use in the training pool. The pilots swam across the pool using the survival breast, side and backstroke. They also had to do an underwater swim.

After successfully completing all strokes, the motivated Marines and Sailors dressed up in their full flight gear, which consisted of their flight suit, boots, helmet, survival vest and low profile flotation collar to begin the real training.

“The training is awesome,” mentioned Pittsburgh native Staff Sgt. James McGuinness, CH-46E standard evaluator, Marine Medium Helicopter Training Squadron 164. “It helps us think about what could really happen.”

The first training exercise that the pilots underwent put the Marines and Sailors through a simulated crash in the pool. After each pilot sat down and fastened their seatbelt, an instructor would turn the seat over, and the pilot would have to escape the simulated aircraft.

“It’s a little disorienting at first, I was nervous,” explained Petty Officer 2nd Class Maxwell E. Bjerke, aviation warfare systems operator. “But if you listen to the instructors, they really do a good job of telling you what you need to know,” continued the San Diego native.

The next phase of training teaches the Marines and Sailors how to properly use the Helicopter Apparatus Breathing Device bottles.

“They are like mini scuba bottles. They train the pilots how to breathe under water,” said Dingle.

The Marines and Sailors held the HABD bottles against their mouths and the instructors dunked them upside down in the water.

“This exercise was designed to build the pilots’ confidence in the water,” said Dingle.

In the next training exercise, the pilots not only had to have confidence in themselves but in each other as well. The servicemembers were then put into a realistic storm scenario.

The pilots had to climb into a life raft after inflating it, undergo a series of mishaps, before a crane rescued them.

This is close to an actual situation, and there weather machines to add to the simulation, explained Dingle.

After completing each exercise the Marines and Sailors must go to the dunker tank, which simulates a helicopter crash.

The pilots get into a replica aircraft, which is released into the tank. After being submerged into the water they must escape, completing their training.

“This training is vital,” said Lackowski. “Pilots attest to this training saving their lives.”

Heavy equipment mechanics keep Marines rolling in Iraq

Story by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III

MWHS- 3 Forward Deployed

AL ASAD, Iraq – Operational tempo for Marines here is fast and furious and can be difficult to maintain. However, the Marines of Marine Wing Support Squadron 273, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, are up to the challenge and have proved that since arriving in theater.

“Almost everything we have to fix here is a priority,” said Staff Sgt. James A. Munchel, heavy equipment maintenance chief, MWSS-273. “The Marines saw how fast they needed to get their job done and began to step up to the challenge. So far, the troops are turning and burning their wrenches and doing a great job.”

The heavy equipment maintenance Marines are also in charge of repairing all the machinery used for engineering and construction projects.

“We can fix anything from forklifts to bulldozers,” added the 33-year-old Baltimore native. “Each section of the heavy equipment department plays a key role in mission accomplishment.”

Repairing heavy equipment is a mission Lance Cpl. Hipolito A. Castillo, heavy equipment mechanic, MWSS-273, and 20-year-old Houston native, had in mind when he joined the Marine Corps in 2003.

“Fixing cars and trucks is what I grew up with,” he said. “It’s the only thing I wanted to do when I joined. We work more out here, but it gives me more of an opportunity to learn new things we cannot learn in (Beaufort, S.C.).”

Because of the high demand for heavy equipment here, there is consistently a hefty workload for the Marines.

“Not as many vehicles break down in (Beaufort, S.C.),” added Castillo.

“Vehicles are constantly breaking down here, and it keeps us working around the clock. We go to work when the sun comes up, and we put down our wrenches when the sun goes down.”

According to Lance Cpl. Damon M. Maggiore, heavy equipment mechanic, MWSS-273, and Long Island, N.Y., native, the importance of his job here gives him a sense of accomplishment.

“I have always been mechanically inclined,” added the 20 year old.

“Nothing out here can be built without heavy equipment. It makes me feel good knowing we keep this stuff running so the other Marines can get (their) jobs done.”

Another benefit Maggiore is gaining from his long hours and rigorous work schedule is the ability to learn and adapt to a new environment.

“I know in the rear our equipment breaks down, so I figured out here it would be worse,” he added. “I expected this tempo but I like it because it keeps me occupied. Although I may be tired, I know the other Marines can work when we fix their equipment.”

Munchel feels similarly about the job they do and uses a simile with his Marines that he feels puts things in

perspective for them.

“This job is like a game of chess,” he said. “As long as you have your pieces in the right place you are going to have a strategic game. Just like in chess, the more you play, the better you will get.”

As for his personal feelings concerning his Marines and the job they are doing, Munchel said that he will continue to push his leathernecks forward and give them the support they need.

“This is what these Marines love to do,” he added. “The troops are what keep us alive around here, and they carry all the weight. All the praise goes to them for a job well done.”



Lance Cpl. Hipolito A. Castillo, heavy equipment mechanic, Marine Wing Support Squadron 273, Marine Wing Support Group 37, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, puts the headlight on a 5-ton forklift after rewiring it May 4. Castillo is one of more than a dozen mechanics with his unit who are tasked with repairing various types of engineering and construction vehicles. *Photo by Sgt. J.L. Zimmer III*

Marines, family celebrate Multicultural Heritage Day

Story by Sgt. Kristen L. Tull

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Every year the air station turns its youth sports complex into a one-stop shop for a Multicultural Heritage Day celebration.

This year booths were decorated to the hilt; authentic food was cooked and performers danced and sang.

"It's a day to celebrate the diversity and unique ethnic cultures we have in the Marine Corps and the United States," said D.J. McCluskey, a Marine Corps Community Services employee, and it's also a way for units to earn money for their recreation funds.

"They are raising money by selling food and by the competitions we're holding," said McCluskey. "We have judges that go around and judge the food, the entertainment and the education booths."

If a single unit were to win all three categories they could win \$750 to put toward whatever they want.

"We're looking for things such as appearance, showmanship, crowd participation and overall impression," said Sgt. Maj. Charles Oldham, Marine Aircraft Group 11.

They also had a "bonus" category called the "suck-up factor." When the judges come around each group gets their chance to win the judges over in hopes to add a few extra points to their score.

"Aviation supply won last year in education and food, and they are defending their title," said McCluskey.

This year they did a Hawaiian theme. When customers walked up to their booth they were greeted by dancing girls handing out leis as well as native music and sweet smells of grilled meat on a stick. Inside the booth a PowerPoint presentation was set up to teach the culture of the aloha state.

"We've been the defending champs for two years in a row," said Petty Officer 1st Class Robert Martin, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron aviation supply clerk. "We started planning this after last year's festival and have been working on our booth for the past three months."

The day was not only to educate people, but also to give the units a chance to get out of their workspace and show their pride.

"We had a really good turnout this year. Everyone seems to be having a good time; the judges are really working each booth asking them hard questions to make sure they really know their stuff," said McCluskey.

This year medical took the gold in all three categories - education, entertainment, as well as food. The country they featured was Korea.

According to Petty Officer 3rd Class Tina Terrones, the unit will hold a meeting to decide what they are going to do with the money.



Dancers from Brazil show off their acrobatic skills at this year's Multicultural Heritage Day festival. *Photo by Sgt. Kristen L. Tull*

Team Marines studies real Marines

Story by Sgt. W.A. Napper Jr.

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

In the high-octane world of NASCAR racing, a mistake that uses an extra fraction of a second in the pits can cost a driver a trip down victory lane. A top squad of approximately seven pit crewmembers take care of a stock car the second it stops rolling down Pit Road. One crewmember jacks the car up, two replace the front and rear tires, two deal with gas, one cleans the windshield and one passes the driver water or any other items they may need.

Likewise, in Marine Forward Operating Refueling Point operations in a combat environment, every second counts. Each moment a pilot is on the ground their life and the lives of their crew is at risk. Seconds may mean the difference between life and death.

In an effort to streamline movement on the ground for Marine refuelers, Marine Wing Support Group 37 invited NASCAR's Team Marines pit crew to Marine Air Ground Combat Training Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., to view a FARP in action.

"(MWSG-37's Operations Officer) Lieutenant Colonel Blish read in a magazine about the British inviting their Formula One pit crews to review their operations, and their time on the ground was reduced by 50 percent," said Lt. Col. Thomas M. Doman, assistant operations officer, MWSG-37. "We've turned to our experts in NASCAR, and if we take off one minute that means less time they might get shot by RPGs."

After meeting three members of the Team Marines pit crew and Benny Parsons, also known as the "Voice of NASCAR," officials from MWSG-37 escorted the members aboard MAGCTC Twentynine Palms. After meeting at a rally point, everyone was escorted by a convoy to Landing Zone Gypsum Ridge to watch and critique Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 Marines refueling operations with CH-53s, CH-46s, UH-1s and AH-1s in a field environment.

"MWSS-373 was in the field for (Combined Arms Exercise) five and six, and this particular day was a day in between where they

See NASCAR, page 11



Plaque honors Mustangs

Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti, commander of Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, showcases a newly donated plaque in the Officer's Club here Tuesday. The plaque was donated by the Marine Corps Mustang Association "In honor of Marine Corps mustangs past, present and future who have gallantly served their country in both the officer and enlisted ranks of the United States Marine Corps." *Photo by Cpl. Jeff Zaccaro*

Sharpshooters earn well deserved jet rides

Story by Sgt. Kristen L. Tull

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Marines and Sailors at Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 have a little extra incentive to always perform to the best of their ability. If they receive a quarterly or yearly award, they will find themselves suiting up and heading out to the back seat of an F/A-18 Hornet.

“The program is called the Incentive Program. It aims to recognize Marines for their work in a rewarding way,” said Capt. Ryan Welken, safety personnel at VMFAT-101.

Once the Marine or Sailor has been designated as an incentive rider, the request is routed through the proper chain of command, they are given a period of instruction and sent up on an actual training mission with the squadron that lasts about 45 minutes.

“It lets them know how important they are, that what they do is critical to us completing the mission,” said the Minneapolis native.

Petty Officer 1st Class Victoria Vanravenswaay, quality

assurance representative for VMFAT-101, is no rookie when it comes to being a “back-seater.” This is her first time going up for an incentive ride with VMFAT-101 for being Sailor of the Quarter, but she also got to fly with her last command as well.

“This time was neat because we went up as part of a four-man team to perform a mission called ‘circle the wagon’ which is used for bombing practice,” said Vanravenswaay, a Grand Blac, Mich., native. “We also took off on afterburner, which gives them an extra boost to take off faster.”

She said it is a great program to bring the maintainers and the aircrew together, and it really promotes camaraderie.

“They get to see what we do when we send the aviators out on the actual training missions,” said Welken.

The program helps the maintenance side of the house to see the operational side on a firsthand basis.

The most recent Marine to receive a flight through the incentive program was Cpl. Gregory Slusher, airframe mechanic with VMFAT-101. Slusher said he strived to reach his goal of getting noncommissioned officer of the quarter

not only for the pride, but also for the ride.

“We see hundreds of flights a day, and 90 percent of us will never be able to go up in one, so it’s a really a great incentive,” said Slusher.

When asked about the flight, Slusher remembered everything.

“Hearing all the air traffic control was pretty exciting, pulling G’s to pulling negative G’s and feeling weightless was a very weird feeling,” said Slusher. “The pilot is doing a million different things at once, so that’s where I gained a lot of respect. We really don’t know what they do. We think it does a lot of stuff on it’s own. But it’s pretty crazy, back in the back, I was barely keeping myself from blacking out, and I couldn’t do any more than that. I could barely flip the toggle switch to talk to the pilot, and he’s up their flying, dropping bombs, communicating with the ground and all kinds of things.”

Slusher said it was a great experience overall. “I never thought I would get the opportunity, so it really meant a lot to me,” said Slusher.

MWSS-373 Marines build combat engineers’ symbol

Story compiled by Cpl. Paul Leicht

MCAS Miramar Combat Correspondent

Military combat engineers have used a variety of symbols to communicate an image of unity and strength while identifying and distinguishing themselves from fellow servicemembers.

Marine combat engineers have adopted the traditional turreted-castle symbol as an important visual representation of the long history and significance of their job specialty dating back to the 19th century.

A few weeks ago, the Marine engineers of Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 began a project to construct this castle symbol in front of their squadron.

“A key symbol in the combat engineer community is the engineer castle,” said 1st Lt. Ricky A. Nail, officer-in-charge, MWSS-373. “Since we have engineers in our squadron and part of our mission as an MWSS is basic engineering, our commanding officer wanted a castle built in front of his headquarters.”

He explained that the castle would tell anyone visiting or passing by his command that engineers have a large footprint in the squadron.

While there are many other equally important military occupation specialties

represented in the support squadrons, the engineering function is an underlying or enabling function for many of the other functional areas of aviation ground support. The castle is a fitting symbol for the basic engineering mission that is involved with creating and operating forward operating bases for Marine aviation, added the Middleburg, Fla. native.

The idea was presented to the squadron’s drafting and survey section, which then began overall planning for the castle project.

“(DSS) took the idea and ran with it,” Nail explained. “The plans they generated were extremely detailed, all the way down to the cut list, brick by brick and layer by layer.”

With the plans in hand, Marines from the squadron’s construction platoon began work on the castle.

“We even worked together on a few weekends to cut the bricks, do a dry assembly and put it together with mortar before the final cleaning stage,” said Lance Cpl. Derek W. Ceglowski, engineer, MWSS-373, and a native of Bottineau, N.D.

“Right now we’re putting the finishing

See CASTLE, page 11



Pfc. Shawn McNamara (left), a native of Boston, and Lance Cpl. Derek Ceglowski, a native of Bottineau, N.D., both engineers with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373, work to remove excess mortar from the turreted castle. Photo by Cpl. Paul Leicht

Chapel weekly schedule of events

Holy Family Catholic Community

- ◆ Mass: 11 a.m. Sunday, 11:30 a.m. weekdays.
- ◆ Rosary: 10:30 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Confession: 10:15 a.m. Sunday or for appointments call Father Berchmanz at 577-1333.
- ◆ Religious classes for children for first communion, confirmation: 9:30-10:45 a.m. Sunday.
- ◆ Youth gathering and planning following mass Sunday.
- ◆ Baptism: Normally the first Sunday of the month. Call the chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Marriage: Call the chaplain for details at least six months before wedding.
- ◆ Instruction in the Catholic faith (RCIA). Call the chaplain's office for details.
- ◆ Scripture Class: 7 p.m. Wednesday in the Chapel classroom.
- ◆ Choir Practice: 6 p.m. Wednesday in the Main Chapel.

Liturgical Christian

- ◆ Sunday: Choir rehearsal at 9 a.m.
Liturgical worship at 9:30 a.m.
Adult/Youth/Children bible study at 10:45 a.m.
- ◆ Tuesday: Morning prayer group (Room 4) at 6 a.m.
Contemporary Gospel Service at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Wednesday: Crafts and conversation at 9 a.m. Free childcare provided.
Women's bible study at 10:45 a.m.
Baptist service at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Thursday: Liturgical choir rehearsal at 7:30 p.m.
- ◆ Friday: Baptist bible study at 7 p.m.

Jewish

- ◆ First Friday of the month at MCRD San Diego at 7 p.m.
- ◆ Last Friday of the month in Edson Range Chapel Camp Pendleton at 7:30 p.m.

For more information during work hours call the Chaplain's Office at 577-1333 or the command duty officer after hours at 577-1141.

Wrestling tickets

All active duty military in uniform and with valid military ID will be admitted free (one ticket per uniformed military member) to World Wrestling Entertainment Raw at the San Diego Sports Arena Monday at 5:30 p.m.

The offer is valid only at the San Diego Sports Arena Box Office and only on Monday.

For those looking for guaranteed seats, all active duty military, reservists, retired military, Department of Defense employees and their families can purchase up to eight discounted tickets on selected seating.

For more information on the event and the offer visit www.mccsmiramar.com.


Fish pond now open

The Miramar Fishing Pond is officially open for all Miramar active duty, reservists, retired military, Department of Defense employees and their families for catch and release fishing.

The pond, stocked for two years with bass, catfish and bluegill, is open during daylight hours and located near the west end of the flightline.

The Marines have worked with Marine Corps Community Services and base facility services to improve the pond area with new docks, walkways, benches, emergency telephones and handicap accessibilities.

For more information call 577-4150.



Miramar Station Theater closed for renovations

The Miramar Station Auditorium/Movie Theater is scheduled to re-open its doors this summer following the completion of renovations. Station patrons can expect a grand opening celebration mid-June.

Renovations include new carpeting, tile and seating, as well as installation of an air conditioning and heating system, a fire safety system and a new roof.



Miramar fish pond opens

Maj. Gen. Jon A. Gallinetti (center), commander, Marine Corps Air Bases Western Area, joined by Cmdr. Jim Cunha (left), commanding officer, Naval Consolidated Brig, and Col. Ray Adamiec, G-4 assistant chief of staff, MCABWA, officially opens the Miramar Fish Pond with a ceremonial first cast May 10. *Photo by Sgt. Kristen L. Tull*

Healthy Corps

The Miramar Sports Complex will host the Healthy Corps Health Fair Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Field #2.

Activities will include health and fitness displays, nutrition education, product samples, a dental van, fitness challenge, team competitions and health screenings. Stop by the Semper Fit Center to sign up for events. There will also be an opportunity to send a video message to forward deployed Miramar Marines and Sailors.

For more information call 577-1331.



For information on
deployed 3rd MAW Marines
and Sailors, call the
Dictaphone at
1-877-616-8762.
For more information, call
577-7397/7294.

AWARD,
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Dubois, was the “wing’s outstanding support of families left behind. By developing Operation Enduring Families, this installation has worked hard to place special emphasis on the support needed by those families of deployed Marines.”

Today, with the war on terrorism and air station Marines deployed around the world, Miramar makes family members and those left behind a top priority, added Gallinetti.

“It means a lot to our deployed troops to know that they have an installation like Marine Corps Air Station Miramar taking care of their families. It means a great deal to their quality of life.”

In addition to executing superb initiative to improving quality of life to those aboard the air station, Dubois sad the Marines at Miramar excelled at achieving mission performance through “through technological innovations while simultaneously reducing their budget.”

In a letter to this year’s recipients, President George W. Bush thanked the men and women in uniform, their families and community supporters who helped the installations achieve this great success.

“Our nation is strong because of the dedicated men and women who have willingly as-

sumed the duty of military life and built a great tradition of service and patriotism. As we continue to fight the war on terror, members of our armed forces are representing our country with bravery and distinction,” he added. “I commend this year’s recipients of the 2004 Commander in Chief’s Award as you are recognized for your commitment to America through outstanding management, leadership and decision making.”

Gallinetti said he was “very humbled and very proud” to be a recognized as a winner of this year’s award.

“We are going to strive to continue that theme of excellence at Miramar and strive to take care of all the Marines, Sailors, civilians and their families here.”

ARMOR,
continued from page 2

hard material.”

Recognizing the importance of keeping troops safe in the global war on terrorism, U.S. authorities have been working diligently to field the new equipment for Marines and Soldiers on the ground in foreign lands.

Last fall, Congress approved a supplemental appropriations bill to buy more body armor, with 30,000 destined to complete gear issue for troops in Iraq, according to a recent White House

press release.

“We will quickly pass this (new) funding because we must and will prevail in Iraq and elsewhere in the war on terrorism,” said Hunter.

NASCAR,
continued from page 8

could set up FARP operations,” said Doman, a Royal Oak, Mich., native. “We wanted this to be as realistic as possible to all effects, from the convoy to setting up area security.”

After the pit crew had spent the day watching several landings from each aircraft, they addressed the Marines.

“One of the biggest things I’ve found to function better (in the pits) is to have that zeal, that enthusiasm for what you’re doing,” said Al Shuford, assistant safety director, Team Marines.

“You obviously love what you do, but you need to keep that spark all the time. What we do is create an internal competition and have a plan for refinement of movement (in Pit Row),” he added.

Shuford suggested having a plan for each refuel and to have the same Marines handle the same part of the process each time. Harold Holly, crew chief, Team Marines, agreed with Shuford that the FARP Marines’ method was extremely efficient.

“The system I saw looks well designed,” he said. “These guys have phenomenal teamwork, and teamwork is the biggest thing you can have.”

Doman said he took three main points away from the pit crew’s visit – to keep individual and team enthusiasm up, to have a solid plan each time and to practice immediate action drills. He’s going to take those points to an upcoming Operational Advisory Group meeting to see how all of the Corps’ MWSSGs can implement those points into their annual training.

“It all comes down to small-unit leadership,” said Doman. “It’s things like this that opens up people’s eyes for ideas on how to improve.”

CASTLE,
continued from page 9

touches on the castle,” said Pfc. Shawn P. McNamara, engineer, MWSS-373, and a Boston native.

“After we chisel off excess mortar and clean it up with an acid bath, we’ll attach a plaque and the wood doors to the front, and then it will be done,” he added.

Nail said MWSS-373 plans to hold a ceremony to unveil the castle and dedicate it to the squadron.